

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast!

Lord of life and power,
Through the mighty resurrection of your Son, You have overcome the old order of sin and death and have made all things new in Him. May we, being dead to sin
And alive to You in Jesus Christ, reign with Him in glory, who with you and the Holy Spirit is alive, one God, now and forever, Amen.

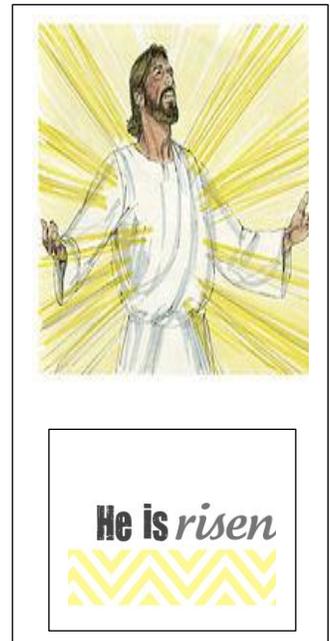
Almighty God, who through thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly beseech thee, that as by thy special grace thou dost put in to our minds good desires, so by thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Readings: Acts 10:34-43 Psalm 118: 14-24, Colossians 3:1-4, John 20: 1-18

Christ is risen! Christ is risen! No matter how many Good Fridays I grieve through or how many Easter sunrises I see, I do not believe I can ever say Christ is Risen enough. **I never tire of it.** It never ceases to put joy in my heart.

We rejoice today. Our Saviour “wins” today. God-s will and Gods love are vindicated today. Death is defeated forever. And all of this is God’s Work, done for us and not by us. And perhaps most wonderfully, some of the wounds of God Himself are healed.

Have you ever thought about that? To understand, we need to remind ourselves of the beginning of God’s relationship with mankind as described in Genesis. When God created human beings “in His image”, He provided them everything they needed to live in joy and in love forever. God Himself came “down” and walked through the Garden with them. There was no space dividing



man and woman from the Creator. There was but one restriction and God warned man and woman that if they did not obey that restriction they would surely die. It was God's dream, hope, vision, and plan that they would believe Him and trust Him and keep away from evil. They did not. We call it the Fall. And the heart of God was wounded by their disobedience for sure, but also wounded by the suffering and anguish they – people He loved - would henceforth endure themselves and bring upon the whole human race. That suffering was death. And the consciousness of mortality. And fear. And an increasing separation from the presence of God because of the fruit of evil – greed, lust, hate, disbelief, faithlessness that grew and grew and grew. Read the prophet Hosea if you want a very, very clear picture of the longing and loving and pain that the God the Father experienced over Israel...it's enough to set you weeping. On Easter morning, the Fall was remedied, the undoing of death was accomplished and God's heart rejoiced. As by one man, Sin entered, now by one Man, life entered. That one Man of course was Jesus. Alleluia.

God one day will do for us what He has done for Jesus. At the right time, our own human bodies will be resurrected from our burial places and we will live not only in that place called Heaven, but be fully alive and ourselves- yet better- walking on the New Earth and the New Heaven recreated by God's will and power. Alleluia.

That is the teaching of theology. Let's look now at what we can learn from human experience.

This drama begins with a lot of walking, looking, running, hearing, telling, waiting, and grieving and there is great meaning in all of it. But for today, I want us to focus on what Jesus was saying and doing with heartbroken Mary.

When Mary speaks supposing Jesus to be the gardener, Jesus knows that only one thing will bring her out of her deep grief. He tenderly calls her by name. **Mary.** Everything changes immediately. She sees him, and knows him and it's alright to breathe again. She leans in for a hug and He says **“Don't cling to me”**. Why? Two

things: First Jesus is about to go to His Father - what a scene that would be – and Mary has to hurry off and do something more important than having personal time with Jesus on this particular morning. Basically, she must not cling to Him because they both have urgent business to do. He gives her her marching orders in two commands: One: **Don't Be Afraid, and Two: "Go and Tell"**.

My goodness, how could she not be afraid? She is seeing something and Someone before her very eyes that she did not expect to see that morning. She went to the tomb that morning for the same reason we go to cemeteries...to somehow "be with" someone we love. We do it for LOVE and we do it to MOURN. That's why the tears so often blind us, just as they did Mary, who did not recognize the glorious man speaking to her as the suffering Man she had herself seen breathe His last, the Man she'd watched being taken down from the Cross, the blood-stained body of the One who in life had meant so very much to her. **Go and Tell? How could she do that.. who would ever believe a woman? The men would have a good laugh, offer her a tonic and put her off to bed.** Yet clearly Jesus meant it: "Go and tell my disciples and Peter ... go quickly, now...and she did. To our utter delight and joy Mary did exactly that; damn the torpedoes and bring on the scoffers. **She didn't just GO, she RAN.** She was no longer afraid.

Even so, when we are not afraid, we are powerful people. We can face distress without despair; we can mourn most heartfully and not be left hopeless; we can find our tongues and speak wisely to pass on the news about Jesus to others. "Don't be Afraid" is a commandment, not a suggestion. It is also a process and a choice that we practice. We'll get better at it. We will even get better at passing those words along. They need so badly to be heard in this world where there seems to be so very much to fear.

What is it today that we fear? Well, covid-19 is right up there. Perhaps we already have a health crisis, or fear that someone we love is in financial difficulties which we ourselves cannot take away. Perhaps a job has been lost, a business suddenly closed, How can we help children crying to see their friends. Perhaps we fear being alone for months

and months. Perhaps our fear concerns the future of our Parish, or the church worldwide. Perhaps it is indeed the prospect of our own death.

In all of these situations, we can trust in Christ who is powerfully alive. We can remember the words of Paul that “God does not give us a Spirit of fear; but rather a Spirit of power and a sound mind.”ⁱ We can rejoice that the Man Christ Jesus - Someone who looks like us - awaits us at the right hand of the Father. We can trust in our God who raises the dead. We can **know** that God is good, and God is love. And Love wins. We can rejoice that God will raise us up and call us by Name.

All because of Jesus. Christ is Risen, Christ is Risen indeed. Alleluia.

ⁱ Reference: 2 Tim 1:7



Family Confession and Absolution

All: Most merciful Father, forgive us our sins against you and against each other. Strengthen us to overcome our weaknesses, that we may live in love as you would have us live, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Rev. Judie: Almighty God have mercy on you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

Blessing: The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious onto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace!